



SAFETY ALERT 01-00

**Seventeenth Coast Guard District
United States Coast Guard
Box 25517
Juneau, Alaska 99802**

CALL FOR A FREE DOCKSIDE EXAM

MSO Anchorage	271-6725	MSD Sitka	966-5454
MSO Valdez	835-7223	MSD Ketchikan	225-4496
MSO Juneau	463-244	MSD Kodiak	486-5918
MSD Dutch Harbor	581-3466	MSD Kenai	283-3292

SINKING OF FISHING VESSEL, CREW SURVIVES **CAPE CHINIAK, KODIAK ALASKA**

Background: The Seventeenth Coast Guard District Safety Alert program provides timely safety-related information of “Lessons Learned” from marine casualties in support of “Ready for Sea – Alaska”.

Incident: A 35-ft longliner with a crew of three, took on water and sank approximately 5 miles off Cape Chiniak during the late afternoon of January 5. The vessel was returning to Kodiak with 12,000 pounds of Cod in rough weather (12-15’ seas, 35 knots wind). While the vessel was cresting a wave, the operator heard a loud crack, then observed the aft third of the vessel awash. The vessel was equipped with dewatering pumps, which activated immediately, however the pumps were unable to keep up with the volume of water entering the vessel. The operator notified the Coast Guard on VHF Channel 16 of the vessel’s position and condition and activated the EPIRB as the crew donned immersion suits. The crew launched the liferaft and abandoned the vessel with the EPIRB in hand. The vessel rolled over approximately fifteen minutes later and floated upside down by the stern. Two of the crew climbed into the liferaft. The other crewmember was unable to swim to the liferaft due to a leak in his immersion suit, which allowed seawater to fill the suit and restrict his ability to move. Another immersion suit leaked from a tear in the foot that most likely occurred while preparing to abandon ship. A Coast Guard helicopter arrived on scene within 30 minutes and hoisted the three survivors on board and transported them to an awaiting ambulance in Kodiak. The fisherman who was not in the raft and had a leaking immersion suit was treated for hypothermia.

Lessons Learned: While the cause of the casualty is unknown, there are several lessons learned and “Ready for Sea” safety factors that are relevant to this incident.

1. While underway mariners should assess the current and forecast weather and assess the vessel’s condition to determine the safest way for the vessel to return to port or seek shelter.
2. Crew training in emergency situations is critical. Conducting drills at the dock and while underway prepare crewmembers for emergency situations and increase survival chances.
3. The operator must continually assess a vessel’s stability and loading condition. Indications are that this vessel suffered a catastrophic hull failure. The weight of the catch, the vessel’s course and speed while underway in heavy seas may have created an unsafe condition.
4. Communications were timely and clear. A properly serviced and installed EPIRB was a critical backup to mark the location of the survivors. Positive action to activate and deploy an EPIRB better ensures it sends a distress signal and is not caught up in the vessel’s rigging.
5. Properly fitting and serviced immersion suits save lives. Seawater in survival suits greatly reduces the survival rate and a person’s ability to maneuver. Practice donning immersion suits.
6. Knowledge of how liferafts operate and positive action to activate and launch a liferaft better ensures it deploys properly and in turn saves lives.
7. The vessel did not have a current CG dockside exam. These free exams, performed at the dock, help identify safety deficiencies that can lead to loss of vessels and/or the crew.